

**IN THE ABSTRACT**

Please amend the Abstract as follows:

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(b) A spectral distance calculator includes a calculator, ~~comprising means for~~ performing spectral distance calculations to compare a spectrum of ~~for comparison of an~~ input spectrum, ~~from an input signal in the presence of a noise signal, and a reference spectrum.~~ A memory means for pre-storing a noise spectrum from the noise signal. A masking unit, and means for masking the spectral distance between the input spectrum and the reference spectrum with respect to the pre-stored noise spectrum.

To be published with FIG 2.